



A CHURCH OF IDEAS

A WORKBOOK FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

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INTRODUCTION

This is a workbook for developing ideas that help the church do what it should be doing: Preaching and living the gospel in the world today. The methods presented in this booklet are not difficult. They can be implemented anywhere by young people who care about the church and the gospel. The advice is very simple: **Give young people a place and a voice in all aspects of church life, including decision-making.** This booklet collects examples from around the world about how churches are finding or struggling to find ways to give young people space. This booklet also presents simple frameworks that can help transform your congregation.

There are different ways to use this booklet.

- The case studies in the later part of the book give examples of how youth take part in mak-

ing decisions around the world. You might find interesting comparisons to your situation.

- The theological reflections, criteria and models provide an accessible theoretical framework in order to understand your own context better.
- A double page at the end of the book gives ideas about how to get started and achieve sustainable change.

This publication has been developed by a small group of committed young Christians from five continents.

They share the hope that these ideas can be put to good work in God's kingdom.



THEOLOGICAL REASONS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Baptism creates community. Paul expresses that clearly: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 NRSV). Differences between people may still exist in the church, but these differences do not ultimately define who we are anymore.

And that is not only true for the differences that Paul mentions; it is also true of young and old. We are all important parts of the church and without representation from each demographic, the church will not be whole (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-26). However, this

is not the result of some increased understanding or a human decision. Christ is the source of unity.

Lutheran theology teaches that we become members of the body of Christ through baptism. In baptism, we do not choose Christ but Christ chooses us. For that reason, Lutheran churches baptize children, often at a young age before the child is able to walk or speak on their own. We understand even the youngest child to be fully a member of the body of Christ and therefore fully a part of the church. God calls each of us to offer our gifts and skills for the good of the whole body. Sometimes, God calls us

to that which seems unlikely. God called Jeremiah when he was “only a boy” (Jer 1:6) to be a prophet to the nations (cf. Jer 1:6-7). People of all ages are called to serve God.

We are called to honor all members of the body of Christ by recognizing the unique gifts and skills that we each contribute for the good of the whole. Gifts such as creativity, biblical knowledge, music ministry, leadership, mission at home and in the world and more. We are called to learn from one another and to share knowledge with one another. In Matthew, Jesus commands to always teach (and learn) and to remember that he is always with us to the end of time (Matthew 28:16-29). In sharing our gifts and knowledge with one another, we can learn much more than we ever could alone.

We are united by our shared identity as members of the same body of Christ. Although we are diverse, in age, race, gender, skills and gifts, our differences become a gift. While we are all one in Christ, different parts have different purposes: “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the member in the body each one of them, as he chose.

If we were all a single member, where would the body be?” (1 Cor 12:17-19) Although each and every one of us has something different to contribute to the church body as a whole, we are each vitally important to the body’s function.

Being members of the same body of Christ does not mean that we are identical with the same ideas and skill sets. This can make it challenging to work together. The harder a person works to achieve a goal, the more rewarding it feels once that goal has been met. The struggles that we encounter on our journey strengthen our relationships and our church. We need to share responsibility and ownership.

Our faith is informed and shaped in part as a response to the world in which we live. Older generations had experiences from a different time and place shape their faith that differ from the experiences of younger generations. Our cultural and religious contexts also shape our practice of faith. When we are better able to identify the experiences and contexts that inform our faith then we are less likely to define ourselves based on those distinctions. We need to share and learn from one another in order to understand more deeply what it means to be part of the same body of Christ.



CRITERIA FOR GOOD YOUTH PARTICIPATION

How can we achieve good youth participation in the church? In order to respond to this question, we need a set of criteria of what actually makes youth participation “good”.

There are at least two dimensions: Attitudes and Structure

ATTITUDES THAT PROMOTE “GOOD YOUTH PARTICIPATION” INCLUDE:

Good leadership that creates an atmosphere in which:

- Young people are not afraid to speak their mind
- Nobody criticizes young people because they don’t know the full history of a problem or an organization.
- New ideas and initiatives are welcomed and evaluated fairly.
- Young people are given responsibility appropriate to their gifts.
- Nobody says: “We have tried this before and it didn’t work”
- Nobody says: “We have always done it like this and we are not going to change just because you suggest it.”

COMMUNITY

The community of those engaged in decision-making ensures:

- There is a community of older and younger people who make decisions for the church together.
- There is time for sharing personal experiences and prayers. Not everything is just focused on business.
- Diversity is being accepted and prejudices (that are always present) are being addressed between the generations and other groups.
- It is rewarding and inspiring to be part of the decision-making process. Those involved experience joy in serving and living together.

Therefore, the following criteria are so important:

- Training for new members of decision-making bodies is available (either by organizing it themselves or by joining others)
- The chairpersons of committees and others (like pastors, bishops) are available for questions.
- Space for preparatory meetings before important sessions.
- Training is available for young people in skills like facilitation or public speaking.
- Opportunity to deepen knowledge about faith, theology and church life.
- Mentors who help young people to understand decision-making while they are already active.

STRUCTURE

FREEDOM TO ACT

The church is open to the contribution of young people and to their ideas.

- The church gives space to young people to enact their ideas in all parts of the life of the church.
- There is no long procedure to allow youth projects to happen (especially if they don't require much funding). Young people who take initiatives get feedback quickly.

FREEDOM TO SPEAK AND ACCESSIBILITY

How accessible is the decision-making at the church?

- Communication (like papers and other presentations) is in a form that everybody who is member of the church can understand easily (uses few acronyms, explains the background of an issue or decision)
- Information about how young people can participate is easily accessible to all those who are interested.
- Newcomers are actively asked to contribute.
- Attention is paid to who speaks and how often so those who seldom speak are encouraged and given the opportunity.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE

People who have been around longer know more. This very obvious truth contains a major disadvantage for young people. How should they acquire the knowledge and skills in order to discuss on a level field with the decision-makers of the church?

THE WAY AHEAD: WHAT DOES A CHURCH WITH ACTIVE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING LOOK LIKE?

Many churches around the world would say that they struggle to include young people meaningfully in decision-making. But some churches succeed better than others. This report refrains from proposing particular structures. However, we have identified three basic models for how churches may organize youth participation in decision-making. The models presented are never exactly like that in any church. Most churches use a combination of these models.

These models are used here as an analytical tool to discuss the situation in a specific church context. The paragraphs on the three models start with a short description, list several advantages but summarize also some of the risks. Finally, there is a short paragraph on ways to improve.

MODEL 1: INFORMAL INCLUSION

Churches who work in this model do not have any structure for involving young people in decision-making. Sometimes a young person is elected to a committee, the pastor might ask somebody to join, or young people voice their opinion freely. Everything might happen or nothing at all might happen.

ADVANTAGES:

- It is highly flexible. People always react to the current situation.
- There is very little pressure on either young people or on the older decision-makers. Everything can develop naturally.
- Young people can easily be encouraged according to their individual passion and gifts.

RISKS:

- If the right persons do not connect at the right time, there may be no youth participation in decision-making at all. Youth participation is dependent on the “gatekeepers” like pastors, chairpersons of committees, and others in charge. It depends on good will.
- The same young people are asked again and again because there is no procedure how to involve others. This may lead to burn-out among the few.
- If there are no clear structures established, it is difficult for young people (and other newcomers) to navigate the system or find answers.
- This system can lack transparency because people who have close relationships with those in charge have a clear advantage to get access to information (e.g., family relationships).

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

- Active recruitment campaigns to get people who have not been involved before.
- Information about how to be involved is made available to everybody.
- Training opportunities for youth in decision-making are widely available.
- The “gatekeepers” communicate actively with all young people. More formalized ideas of inclusion are developed like youth forums, talk show evenings with top leaders, online consultations etc.
- Consider including aspects of other models as appropriate

MODEL 2: FORMAL INCLUSION

Unlike model 1, churches who have a formal way of inclusion by designating special seats for young people in decision-making bodies or instituting a youth quota (ie: at least a certain percentage of a decision-making body have to be young people). The Lutheran World Federation requires at least 20 percent people younger than 30 in its decision-making bodies.

ADVANTAGES:

- The representation of young people is secured when important decisions are being taken.
- Youth representation is not an option for the organization but it is ensured.
- It is publicly affirmed that young people participate in decision-making.
- Young people have a place from which to speak and can focus their effort on the issues.

RISKS:

- Sometimes, some seats are just filled without making sure that the candidates are qualified.
- Young people might be represented but their voice may easily be dismissed and others may not listen to their perspective.
- The young members on decision-making bodies do not see themselves as representatives and lose the connection to other young people in the church.

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

- Taking the young delegates seriously and giving them space to fully contribute.
- Giving the young delegates the means to involve more young people into the deliberation of decisions; they should be able to represent a wider constituency.

- Consider including aspects of other models as appropriate.

MODEL 3: FOSTERING STRONG YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Churches that adopt this model actively foster strong youth groups or organizations of young people. In these groups and organizations, young people are typically the main decision-makers on their own behalf. They organize and order their programs for themselves and have the means to make their own ideas happen. They then relate with the wider church by making proposals as a youth organization and take a stand on certain issues that are discussed in the church.

ADVANTAGES:

- Young people learn to work together well and are automatically given good opportunities for leadership development.
- The participation of young people is secured by self-sustaining structures and the younger are being introduced by those who are a little bit older.
- The young people have a louder voice in the wider church because more youth are involved.
- In addition to the contribution to the wider church, the youth organization itself is also a training space for public speaking and respectful debates.

RISKS:

- The youth organization may become like a church of its own with only limited interaction with the wider church. Young people may develop the sense that they don't need anybody else. Older church leadership may become uneasy about the strong voice and perspective of young people.

- The self-organization of the youth also makes conflicts with other organized groups in the church not unlikely.

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

- Early and frequent consultations of the wider church with the youth organization are needed in order to avoid rifts.
- A clear plan is helpful how to make sure that there is a good transition from the membership in the youth organization to other areas in the church once a certain age is reached.

- Consider including aspects of other models as appropriate

It should be noted that none of these models are perfect; they have a number of gaps that need to be filled, in order to be more effective. The central focus and findings of these models suggest that we need all three models working at some or all level(s) in order for us to have efficient youth participation in decision-making. Youth should be given a voice in decision-making in the church and transformed from just representatives or participants to partners with leaders of the church and the wider church community.





CASE STUDY BRAZIL

EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION IN BRAZIL (IELCB)

by Carla Luciane Klôs Schöninger

Membership of the church: 717,000

INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING ON THE CONGREGATIONAL AND SYNOD LEVEL

Young people take full part in the decision-making in the annual parish assembly according to the rules and regulations. There is also one guaranteed seat for a young person in the synod assembly.

However, problems sometimes occur: Young people are not always given the opportunity to fully participate or are not invited to planning meetings. Some elected young people also remain passive and do not contribute meaningfully.

PARTICIPATION EXAMPLES

The youth group in the IELCB congregation in Novo Xingu consists of 25 young people in the ages

of 15-18. Members of other church bodies also participate like some young people who belong to the Methodist Church, the Assembly of God and the Roman Catholic Church.

The youth group prays together, reads the bible, uses power point and video and discusses current issues.

In a recent discussion, the group members reflected on the significance of youth participation in decision-making. By being included in decision-making they feel more valued. They believe being included in decision-making means:

- Freedom to ask questions
- Sharing knowledge
- Having one's own point of view and defending it.
- Credibility in the wider church
- Listening, discussing and being heard
- Deciding what is best for the church
- Planning together

The youth group in Novo Xingu thinks the following is needed for good youth participation:

- Coordination, guidance and training
- Willingness to take responsibility by young people

- Persistence
- Faith in God
- It must be OK to make mistakes

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON THE CHURCHWIDE LEVEL

NATIONALLY

One young person from every synod is member of the National Youth Council.

The National Youth council is represented at the General Conference of the IELCB sending one representative.

In 2010, there is a partnership with the Secretariat for Community Action in order to increase the participation of young people with disabilities.

STRENGTH OF CHURCH WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

- Clear rules that ensure youth participation
- Good connection between a strong youth organization and the representation of young people
- Other efforts to include young people better



CASE STUDY CANADA

Report prepared by Jeff Buhse and Cassandra Eberhardt

OVERALL SITUATION OF THE CHURCH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)

- Youth (birth to confirmation)
- Young Adult (confirmation to age 25)
- 613 congregations
- 162,000 baptized members
- 38,500 baptized members who were not confirmed
- 9,000 enrolled in Sunday Schools

STRUCTURE

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada functions through three major entities: Nationally as the ELCIC, regionally as synods, and locally as congregations. Each entity has unique ministries as well as ministries which are shared with the other entities. The synods are also divided into geographical conferences to assist in their ministry.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WITHIN CONGREGATIONS AND THE INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Youth in confirmation class are encouraged to become involved with various activities

for weekly church services to help foster healthy growth, to encourage them to become active participants in the church, and to build a sense of importance among youth; hoping that youth would grow into active, decision-making young adults.

- All confirmed members are able to participate in church council meetings and are given a vote in the decision-making process of the church council
- Youth and young adults are encouraged to participate and give input in both formal and informal decisions within the church at a local level; while there are no formal rules in place in many congregations youth are still actively encouraged to participate in the decision making process

PARTICIPATION EXAMPLES

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, WINNIPEG, MB

Jeff has been a member of the church council for four years. For this period, there have always been at least three members under 30 years of age; while this is not intentional, youth are actively encouraged to be active participants in this congregation. Furthermore, there is at least one person under 30 on most of the major committees such as Worship and Building (St. Mark's currently has a building committee to plan a large expansion. This committee is headed by a 27 year old.)

HOLY TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, BELLEVILLE, ON

- Similarly, Cassandra's church actively encourages youth and young adults to be active members of the church community and in the decision-making process – a youth/young adult sits on church council and the pastor selection committee. Youth and young adults

are also encouraged to attend and participate in the annual general meeting.

Participation Model – Informal Inclusion

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF THE WHOLE CHURCH AND THE INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

NATIONALLY & REGIONALLY (SYNODICALLY):

- Constitutional changes have enabled youth and young adults to have voice and vote at synod assemblies.
- There are official delegations of youth and young adults who have taught about parliamentary procedures; these delegations are chosen to have equal regional representation.
- Participating in these delegations is competitive, and there is a lot of active recruiting among local churches for youth and young adults to participate
- There are no additional costs for the delegates or for their congregations to attend Synod or National conventions. These costs are covered by the Synod or the National Church in order to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.
- The decision to form official delegations of youth and young adults on parliamentary procedures is one of the many ways in which the ELCIC has included youth and young adults in the decision-making process. They are equipping individuals with the tools they will need to participate at all levels in the formal decision-making process. This is a decision that was made with youth/young adults and by adult members of the church at the national and synodical levels to get more youth and young adults involved.



Participation Model – Formal Inclusion

STRENGTH OF CHURCH WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

- There are many opportunities for youth to be involved in decision-making in the ELCIC; this occurs at all levels: congregational, synodical, and national
- The number of youth and young adults present on committees at all levels of the church, both informally and formally, has been increasing exponentially over the years. Youth and young adults are actively encouraged to come out and participate, as well as to be active members of the church

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- One of the main aspects that can still be improved is in the area of participation versus engagement – looking at how youth can be fully involved as partners in the deci-

sion-making processes versus youth merely participating in governance and meeting quotas.

- Access to opportunities can be difficult for youth and young adults (rural parishes / geography of Canada – distance and cost of travel can be obstacles)
- Geography and access to opportunities can perhaps be cited as the greatest obstacle that the ELCIC face when it comes to youth participation in decision-making
- Geographical situation makes it difficult for youth and young adults to access opportunities for involvement in decision-making at all levels of the church; travel takes a long time and is very expensive.
- Addressing the attitude of finding ways to get youth involved in the church rather than giving them a job that no one else wants

QUOTE FROM YOUTH ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

“Youth or any group should not be viewed as a token, minority groups should not be a figure or quota to be filled. The voice of youth is valid and we have many gifts. We hope you will give us the place to grow (...) Youth are the yeast, they are a necessary ingredient in activating the bread.”

“The church of today yearns for new forms of growth, which youth can offer. They come naturally to us.”

— *Matt Guess, a youth delegate from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)*



CASE STUDY NIGERIA

by Mofonobong Archibongg

The inclusion of young people in decision-making has been encouraged by the leadership of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria since its inception.

1) FORMAL INCLUSION

Young people are formally included in the decision-making structures of the church on all levels. There is always at least one young person member of the board of directors. This way, young people are given opportunities to serve in decision-making bodies thereby influencing the decisions of the church. This type of participation is part of the constitution of the church.

2) FOSTERING STRONG YOUTH ORGANIZATION

The formal inclusion of young people in decision-making is based on a strong youth organization.

The youth fellowship exists on all levels of the church. This organization enables young people to plan and develop ideas as a team with one vision and purpose and passes the same to the Church highest bodies at all levels.

The youth fellowship will also name people to represent youth in the governing bodies on all levels.

3) LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

However, for young people to influence church decisions meaningfully, there is an urgent need to train youth leaders at all levels of the church. This gives them the capacity to contribute meaningfully in decision-making for the growth of the church.

4) YOUNG PEOPLE IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY

If young people are elected into positions of authority, it will afford them direct opportunities to influence key decisions as they affect church growth. Besides, the age of young persons should not be underrated as he/she should be identified and utilized based on their God-given potentials.





CASE STUDY: LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SINGAPORE

by Hui Rong Mindy Yeo

Church membership: 3,100

Almost 10 percent of the members of the Lutheran Church of Singapore (LCS) are between 13- 18 years old.

Constitutionally, a person who is below 18 years old has no voting rights at the annual meeting, the highest governing body of the church. This would also be the case at the Annual General Meeting of the local

congregation. Formal youth participation is lacking in this case. However, there is a possibility that this might change as the LCS Executive Committee considers putting in place a quota for at least one young person has to be represented in the committee.

This might ensure the physical youthful presence but might serve little in ensuring participation unless the young man or woman is confident in her or his role in decision-making. He or she needs to

believe that the voice of youth is valued and has influence over the final choice.

The LCS has expressed much sincerity in engaging youth in the past year. The budget for youth development and programs has increased by 40% in the new financial year. As Bishop Terry Kee said, "We are putting our money where the heart is."

The LCS has also shown tremendous support to youth through supporting a combined youth camp in December 2009 that gathered almost 90 youth from 4 congregations in Singapore. Apart from monetary support, the pastoral staff has been forthcoming in equipping the youth by teaching and meeting with the youth.

While the formal structure is lacking, the youth workers in the local congregations are given the freedom to develop youth activities and programs. They have the liberty to plan and engage youth with much autonomy. The adults in the congregations encourage the youth in their endeavors and provide assistance.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE JURONG CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In my local congregation, Jurong Christian Church, the Church Council is willing to embrace young people in their midst. They are given the opportunities to express their views on all issues. The youth leaders are also given the freedom to chair the youth council and lead the youth in areas of worship, discipleship, prayer and outreach.

The Youth Ministry can propose an annual budget for youth activities and there is little restriction over the programs that the young people plan. The youth are empowered to take charge and grow unrestrained in this spiritual community. This reflects an environment that is geared towards fostering a strong youth organization.

Kao Hui Ling, a 21-year-old youth leader, responds to the question whether youth should be given more opportunities in decision-making in the church.

"Of course! However, everything should be in moderation. These decisions that we make should be backed by at least one adult. At the same time, adults should not be too critical of us. We need more of their support. However, the question of who is the youth making the decision is crucial too."

At a recent LCS youth leaders' gathering, the speaker, Suan Choo, reflected on 2 Timothy 2 and offered some spiritual insights on leadership. One of the lessons that she taught, was that leaders need to know the importance of continuity. Adult leaders in church need to know that the youth leaders of today are being trained to carry the torch for the future. Through their lives, mature leaders can lead by "showing and telling", how to live their lives. This is as opposed to simply telling and telling only.

"How can we be able to judge if the youth are ready and mature to make decisions? Adults just have to allow the youth to make decisions as they deem best using God's wisdom, then trust God."



CASE STUDY: CHURCH OF SWEDEN

by Celina Falk

Membership: 6.6 million members

Church of Sweden comprises of 71% of the population in Sweden. Of the members about 2.4 million, 36.2%, are between the age 0 and 30. About 14,000 people that are 0 to 30 years old are members of the youth movement within the Church of Sweden, called Church of Sweden Youth.

Church of Sweden Youth is the voice for the children and youth within Church of Sweden. Church of Sweden Youth and Church of Sweden have a co-operation agreement in which both agree to meet twice a year and the Church of Sweden Youth receives financial support in turn for working with

children and youth. The agreement is currently being revised.

DECISION-MAKING IN CHURCH OF SWEDEN

The Church of Sweden is divided into 13 dioceses with a total of 1,467 parishes. The parishes are autonomous but also part of a diocese and the Church of Sweden.

Every four years, the church members elect their representatives at parish, diocese and national levels. Every member of the Church of Sweden over the age

of 16 is entitled to vote. To be able to stand for election one has to be a member, baptized and at least 18 years old. In the church elections, it is not possible to vote for individual candidates. The votes are cast for nomination groups and their candidates, which may be political parties or other interest groups created to participate in the church elections.

The following governing bodies are formed:

Parish Assemblies or directly-elected Parish Councils deal with issues concerning the life of the parish, such as its organized activities and the goals of the parish.

When several parishes work together financially and administratively an Association Vestry is elected. The Association Vestry decides on financial and property issues.

The job of the diocese is to support the parishes in developing their work. The Diocesan Council is the highest decision-making body in the diocese. The Diocesan Council elects the Chapter, which oversees the parishes and clergy, ensuring that they keep the doctrine and practice of the Church of Sweden.

The General Synod is the Church of Sweden's highest decision-making body and has 251 members. This is where issues affecting the church's regulations and the position taken by the church are decided. The General Synod also decides on how baptisms, confirmation, weddings and funerals are conducted. The General Synod elects the Central Board.

At the church election in 2009 there were 15 people, or 6%, of the 251 members of the General Synod between 18 and 30 years old.

The decision-making process belongs to model 1: informal inclusion and model 3: fostering strong youth organizations. There are no structures that guarantee a certain percentage of youth in the General Synod. Church of Sweden Youth is consulted in many ways, but has no real power in the General Synod or the other decision-making bodies and can

only try to win over the members in the decision-making bodies for their issues.

DECISION-MAKING IN CHURCH OF SWEDEN YOUTH

The Church of Sweden Youth is based on the local branches in the congregations; today there are about 400 local branches. A local branch within a congregation can consist of only one youth group or all the children and youth in the congregation. There are 1,467 congregations, so Church of Sweden Youth is represented in 27% of the congregations.

The 13 dioceses of the Church of Sweden correspond to the 13 districts in the Church of Sweden Youth. Each district has a district board elected by the district annual meeting. The districts are the link between the local branches and the national level, and are also responsible for helping the local branches with information sharing, leadership training, arranging camps, etc.

The national level supports the districts, implements the guidelines decided by the Major Annual Meeting, for example by initiating projects, publications and leadership training. The national level consists of a president, a national board, elected by the Major Annual Meeting, and a national office which is located in Uppsala with 10 employees.

The Bi-annual Meeting is the legislative assembly of Church of Sweden Youth with 300-500 members elected by the local branches. At the meetings, the guidelines for the future work of Church of Sweden Youth are decided. The meeting also evaluates previous activities.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WITHIN CONGREGATIONS AND THE INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The parish of Hortlax in Luleå Diocese has 5,611 members (about 85% of the population in Hortlax). Of those, 2,184 members or 38.9% are 30 years or

younger. The active children and youth in the congregation are organized as a local branch of Church of Sweden Youth.

The Parish Assembly, with 17 members, is the highest decision-making body in the parish of Hortlax. They elect the Parish Council, with 8 members, who together with the rector or senior pastor have the responsibility for the life in the congregation. The Parish Council decides what aims and principal focus the activities in the congregation should have. The staff works according to those guidelines, but can implement them freely.

Neither the Parish Assembly nor the Parish Council have any members that are younger than 30 years old. Both, the Parish Assembly and the Parish Council consider the work with children and youth important. However, they have never asked the youth what they think and want. Earlier, the

Parish Council chose one of the members to be the contact person for the youth, but that never worked in practice. Today the staff are the link between the Parish Council and the youth.

A few years ago the youth group wanted to make a trip and visit congregations of the Church of Sweden Abroad. The idea originated among the youth and staff took the idea to the Parish Council requesting funding for the trip. The youth also worked to earn some money for the trip, but it was the staff who took care of the practical matters.

The youth group plans together with the staff the program for the semester but it is again often the staff who inspires and gives suggestions that the youth can accept or reject.

One of the teachers who works in the congregation considered the possibility that staff served the youth





too much. It might have been better if the youth would have approached the parish council directly.

This example belongs to model 1: informal inclusion.

STRENGTH WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH IN DECISION- MAKING AND ASPECTS THAT STILL CAN BE IMPROVED

All the decision-making bodies and the national office within Church of Sweden support that youth should be included in decision-making processes, but there is still much work to do to make that a reality. How the youth participation works is different depending on the level of the church and diocese. In general it is necessary, to be part of a nomination group or the Church of Sweden Youth. •

To stand for election in the church is for many young people a frightening thought. The term is four years—a long time for many young people. The average age among the elected church officials is high and it is not always easy to be the only young person. One possible solution would be to introduce quotas. For example that 20% of the members in the General Synod should be 30 years old or younger.

Church of Sweden Youth has an idea about a Youth Synod parallel with the General Synod. The Youth Synod should deal with the same motions and questions as the General Synod and be given some time during the General Synod to present their ideas and suggestions. This idea has been up for discussion in the General Synod but was turned down. Instead, the General Synod has decided to start a project about how to develop children and youth work in parishes and dioceses.

HOW TO WORK FOR CHANGE IN YOUR CHURCH

Here are some ideas of what you could do in order to change your church and improve youth participation. The ideas are based on the very helpful book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath.

Chip Heath and Dan Heath make clear that in order to effect change in any organization the following aspects are necessary:

- Rational aspects: The change that you propose has to make sense
- Emotional aspects: People need to feel the need for change and have to be compelled to do the next steps.

RATIONAL ASPECTS

It is necessary to convince people rationally that the idea of youth in decision-making is the right one. Here are some ways that can be done.

FIND THE BRIGHT SPOTS

Look for congregations and churches in which the participation of young people works. What are they doing right? There are some examples in this booklet (pp. 9-21), but it is even better to make contacts with congregations in your own country.

SCRIPT THE CRITICAL MOVES

It is not enough to say: We should involve more young people in decision-making. What does that actually mean? What model (pp. 6-7) should you follow? What are the specific steps that need to be

taken? And if there is real resistance for one direction, perhaps there is an alternate way. For example, if there is resistance to making sweeping changes of the constitution, consider using an aspect of the Informal Model, like campaigning to elect a young person to an existing position.

TAKE CARE OF THE EMOTIONS

People have to feel the change. They need more than mere understanding.

POINT TO THE DESTINATION

Talk about what exactly where you would like to get to in your church, in your congregation. Paint a mental picture of where you would like your community to be. Make it as vivid as possible. What will it be like when young people are fully included in decision-making?

SHRINK THE CHANGE

Make the problem seem solvable. The three models presented in this booklet (pp. 6-7) can be a good start for that. There is already some kind of youth involvement in your church. It can be improved.

GROUNDING IN FAITH

We do not talk about the participation of young people in decision-making, because we consider it just a good idea. It is necessary to make us more fully church. Use theological language and biblical support in order to advocate for youth in decision-making.



HOW TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS

LWF YOUTH

LWF Youth is the Lutheran World Federation Youth Desk. Based in Geneva, the LWF Youth Desk works at fully integrating youth and youth concerns into the life and decision-making of the church and society. To contact the LWF Youth you can visit the blog <http://lwfyouth.org> and also find us at our Facebook page www.facebook.com/lwfyouth.

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Young people bring new ideas to the church. But sometimes they are not heard. Frequently, they don't even sit at the table where the decisions are made.

This booklet offers a stock take of how your congregation, diocese or national church includes young people in decision-making. It contains case studies from five continents, theological reflection and practical tips how the participation of young people can be improved.